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ARMENIA IN IRELAND: INDO-EUROPEAN COGNATES, MEDIEVAL LEGENDS AND PSEUDO-HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

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0. Introduction¹

In this article, I will look at a selection of Celtic works in which Armenian comparanda were previously invoked. In the first part, I will pay particular attention to etymological research in which Armenian lexical items were mentioned in connection with Celtic linguistic data. Secondly, I will look at references to Armenia in medieval Irish documents ranging from *Auraicept na nÉces* to the Irish translation of *The Adventures of Sir Marco Polo*, and, finally, glance at the works of Charles Vallancey and his colleagues of the eighteenth century antiquarian movement, who, when looking for the origins of the Irish race, found them in Armenia.

1. Celtic and Armenian: Indo-European linguistic ancestry

Celtic was recognised as a prominent part of the Indo-European linguistic family since the time of Sir William Jones, Johann Kaspar Zeuss (1853) and others.² Armenian began to be treated as a

¹ I would like to thank Dr Elena Parina for her comments expressed in relation to the earlier version of the sections 1.1-1.12 of this paper. I would also like to thank Petr Kocharov for his generous advice regarding the validity of some Armenian etymologies proposed. Many kind thanks are due to Prof. Séamus Mac Mathúna for his kind support and constant encouragement. All remaining mistakes and omissions are, however, my sole responsibility.

² One need not be reminded of Jones' famous address to the Asiatick Society in Calcutta on 2 February 1786, which laid the foundation of Indo-European Studies as a separate branch of philology: "The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either... there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothick* and the *Celtick*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*" (Müller 1986: 1). Contrariwise, Carl W. F. von Schlegel's musings *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* perceived Celtic (together with Armenian) as marginalised, and hence, unimportant, in contrast with Sanskrit, Germanic, Latin and Greek: "The old Indian language, Sanscrit... has the greatest affinity with the

special branch of Indo-European independent of Iranian since the mid-1870s as a result of the work of Heinrich Hübschmann (1875; 1877; 1883) and Antoine Meillet (1911). Meillet, “in his first article in the *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique*, devoted to the development of Armenian consonant clusters, supported Hübschmann’s view that Armenian is an independent Indo-European language, different from Iranian” (Sommerfelt 1962: 381).

One of the most remarkable features of Armenian phonology, i.e. a sound-change of the Indo-European *p* to *h* in Armenian (cp. Armenian *hayr* ‘father’, *hur* ‘fire’ and Greek *patēr*, *pyr* ‘id.’) was noted by Rasmus Rask in the *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske Sprogs Oprindelse* essay published in Copenhagen in 1818 (Pedersen 1931: 75) and since has become a cliché in Indo-European linguistics.³

In Celtic Studies, it was Whitley Stokes who brought Armenian on a par with Celtic in his etymological studies of Old Irish texts and lexemes.⁴ In a preface to his publication of *The Lives*

Greek, Latin, as well as the Persian and German languages... The affinity of the Indian language with the Armenian, the Slavonian, and the Celtic, is on the contrary, very unimportant, in comparison with the striking uniformity of other languages supposed to be derived from that stock” (cit. from Lennon 2004: 399-400). As regards the question why some languages in the nineteenth century were important and some were not, and how the unimportant suddenly became important, see Ananya Kabir (2011: 94) on various aspects of comparative philology and its place in “the webs of empire that once connected Germany, Ireland, India and Britain, on the one hand, and Europe’s pre-modern past and its imperial present on the other”.

³ This feature itself was noted by Whitley Stokes in ‘Celtic Etymologies’ (1897: 44) and was invoked again in ‘A Supplement to *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*’ (1910: 462) in a note to p. 500, line 13. Comparing Scottish Gaelic with Old Irish, the feature was highlighted by George Henderson in his ‘Supplement to the Outlines of Gaelic Etymology’: “*h* in anlaut before a vowel seems to come from *p*. So apparently in Irish *haue* = *παῦς* and *Hēriu* cognate with *περία*. This change is regular in Armenian, see Brugmann’s *Grundriss*, §30; Stokes in *Bezzenger’s Beiträge*, 23, 44” (Henderson 1911: B).

⁴ In the second part of our work, we will be mainly drawing on Stokes’s translations of medieval Irish compositions in which various references to Armenia are contained. For other aspects of Stokes’s work on comparative linguistics see the collection edited by Boyle & Russell (2011), especially the articles relating to Stokes’s work on comparative philology (Maier 2011), continental Celtic (Blom 2011), Sanskrit cognates and cultural concepts (Fomin 2011), and Early Irish lexicography (Moran 2011).

of *Irish Saints from the Book of Lismore* he included a number of interesting observations in regard to Celto-Armenian linguistic correspondences, for instance, “the Older Irish names for ‘wolf’ are *brech* = Skr. *vr̥ka*, and *fael* = Arm. *gail*” (Stokes 1890: xciv).

Another prominent Celticist, Carl Marstrander, in his 1913 publication of the inaugural volume of *The Contributions to the Dictionary of the Irish Language* series, had included the Armenian cognate of the Irish oronym *Dea*, attested in Ptolemy, namely *Dee*. He invoked this example to demonstrate “that in the 2nd century the Irish substitution of *-ās* by *-iās* in fem. *ā*-stems had not yet taken place” (DIL, s.v. 2 *dea*).⁵

Through time, the stock of linguistic parallels from Armenian became quite substantial in Celtic Studies. For instance, the *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* among other examples includes etymologies of *art* ‘bear’ and *cú* ‘hound’, in which Sanskrit, Avestan, Greek, Latin and Armenian cognates are used:

« **art**, m. “ours”. C’est le vieux nom indo-européen de l’ours: scr. *īkṣah*, av. *arša*, arm. *arj*, gr. *ἄρκτος*, lat. *ursus* »
(Vendryes 1959: A-91)⁶

« **cú** m. th. à nas. “chien”... Il s’agit d’un mot ancien don’t les rapprochements ind.-eur. sont bien connus...: irl. *cú* renvoie à la flexion alternante **kú(u)ōn*, gén. **kúnós*, cf. scr. *śvā*, *ś(u)vā*, gén. *śúnas*, av. *spā*, gén. *sūnam*, armén. *šun*, gén. *šan*, gr. *κύων*, gén. *κυνός*, lat. *canis* ».

(Bachellery & Lambert 1987: C-257)

⁵ The story of the compilation of the DIL is to be found in the ‘Historical note’ to the dictionary written by E.G. Quin in 1975. Unfortunately, this is still the only Armenian linguistic parallel in *The Dictionary of the Irish Language*. Such parallels belong to the field of etymology which, as a subject, for some reason was not popular with the RIA editorial board of the DIL. We shall look at such parallels below, and at this point let us mention that such etymologies are to be found in Matasović 2009; Vendryes 1956, 1960, 1974; Bachellery & Lambert 1987; Lambert 1998.

⁶ Matasović (2009: 42-3) does not include an Arm. cognate in his discussion of PCelt **arto-*.

In addition, with the emergence of the laryngeal theory, Armenian comparanda has become a helpful tool in demonstrating various phonological and morphological changes characteristic of Indo-European and Proto-Celtic. For instance, in his overview of Old Irish K. McCone (1994: 71) invoked Armenian (along with Anatolian and Greek) evidence in order to demonstrate that the laryngeal in initial position was lost before a consonant in Celtic:

Cailleadh laraingeach tosaigh roimh chonsan sa Cheiltis, mar a tharla i bhformhór na dteangacha Ind-Eorpacha seachas an Anatóilis, an Ghréigis agus an Airméinis (h > a-).

The initial laryngeal was lost in front of a consonant in Celtic, as happened in the majority of the Indo-European languages other than Anatolian, Greek and Armenian (*h* > *a*).

In a number of works, Karl-Horst Schmidt (1980; 1985, 1999, 2010) compared various Celtic and Armenian features within the scope of Indo-European linguistics and discovered various points of their intersection. These include the relative pronoun **yos* as well as “the desiderative formation, marked by reduplication as well as by a thematically inflected *s*-suffix, which in roots ending in a resonant is preceded by a laryngeal” (Schmidt 1996: 23), “the prepositional construction in the Insular Celtic languages ... caused by the loss of the participle, a development which is paralleled in Classical Armenian” (*id.*, 2010: 482) and the future formation in *-*syē*-/-*syō*.⁷

In what follows, I will try to survey the stock of linguistic parallels found between Celtic and Armenian vocabularies, which will primarily come from the domain of Indo-European word-formation and etymology.⁸

⁷ For further details, see K. H. Schmidt’s contribution to this volume which is a revised version of his 2007 publication.

⁸ The list of parallels surveyed below is not intended to be an exhaustive one. For further and fuller detail, see Falileyev and Kocharov’s contribution to this volume, esp. part 3, ‘Lexical isoglosses’. I have primarily based my findings on Clackson 2007, Mallory & Adams 2008 (hereinafter MA), Matasović 2009 (hereinafter EDPC) and Martirosyan 2010 (hereinafter EDA) whose research incorporated earlier relevant works in the field, esp. Makaev 1974, as well as others.

1.1. Swadesh-Starostin 100 word list

This survey will begin with an evaluation of Celto-Armenian cognates in a famous 100 culture-free list of terms that are believed to be a core vocabulary constant across various IE linguistic traditions. This list was compiled by Morris Swadesh (1960), reviewed by Johann Tischler (1973), and modified by Sergey Starostin in 2006 in a series of seminars convened in Moscow.⁹

We will use the list as produced by Mallory and Adams (MA 97-9). This list is used in glottochronology and despite the criticisms expressed in relation to the method and the postulates it rests upon, I will look at superficial correspondences provided by the list in order to establish true cognate terms between Celtic – mainly Old Irish (OIr.) as well as occasionally Middle Irish (Mlr.), Old (OW), Middle (MW) and Modern Welsh (NW) – and Classical Armenian (Arm.) which can help us in identifying the level of linguistic commonality that once existed between the two linguistic traditions.

The 100 word list can be broadly divided into the following sections: pronouns (items 1-10 of the list), numerals (11-12), adjectives of size (13-15), nouns connected with humans and animals, including various parts of the body (16-52), verbs of human activity (53-70), cosmological objects and weather conditions (70-75, 91), natural objects (76-85), colours (86-90), adjectives of description of state (92-99) and a noun of naming (100).

Statistical analysis of the Mallory-Adams list shows that Celtic shares only 39% of all its vocabulary compared with Armenian as well as, for instance, with Tocharian (39%), in comparison with Italic (59%), Indic (57%), Iranian (56%) and Germanic (49%). It is only Albanian (27%) and Anatolian (31%) that both have fewer cognates with Celtic than Armenian. So, what are these cognates?

Firstly, these are personal, demonstrative and interrogative pronouns: ‘I’ (PIE **h₁eg̃*, Arm. *es*; PIE **h₁me*, OIr. *mē*, MA 416), ‘you’ (sg.) (PIE **túh₂*, OIr. *tū*, Arm. *du*, MA 416), ‘we’ (PIE **wéi*, OIr. *nī*, Arm. *mek*‘, MA 416), ‘you’ (pl.) (PIE **uswé*, OIr. *sī*, Arm.

⁹ Cit. from Parina 2009: 139; for the most up-to-date discussion of the Swadesh wordlist, its modifications and developments, see Kassian, Starostin, Dybo & Chernov 2010.

i-jez, MA 417), ‘this’ (PIE **so/tód*, OIr. *–so/-d*, Arm. *ay-d*, MA 417-8), and ‘who’ (PIE **k^wós*, OIr. *nech* ‘someone’ (< **ne-k^wos*), Arm. *ov* (< **k^wos/k^wom*), MA 419),¹⁰ and, secondly, a numeral ‘two’ (PIE **dwéh₃*, OIr. *dāu*, Arm. *erku*, MA 310), as well as an adjective of size ‘big; large’ (PIE **megha-*, OIr. *maige*, Arm. *mec*, MA 319).

Also, animate nouns, such as ‘woman’ (PIE **g^wénh_a*, OIr. *ben*, gen. *mna*, Arm. *kin*, gen. *knoĵ*, MA 204-5) and ‘man’ (PIE **h₁nēr*, OIr. *nert* ‘force’ (cf. NW *nēr* ‘hero’), Arm. *ayr*, MA 204), as well as ‘bird’ (PIE **h_aewei*, NW. *hwyad* ‘duck’, Arm. *haw*, MA 143) and ‘dog’ (PIE **k(u)wōn*, OIr. *cú*, Arm. *šun*, MA 138), together with noun-attributes of ‘birds’ and ‘dogs’ – ‘feather/wing’ (PIE **pet(e)r/n*, OIr. *ēn* ‘bird’, Arm. *t’r’č’im* ‘fly’, MA 181) and ‘bone’ (PIE **h₂óst*, OIr. *esna* ‘ribs’, Arm. *oskr*, MA 187 = EDPC 44, **astn(iy)o*).

There are plenty of cognates in the two vocabulary lists dealing with various parts of the human body: ‘ear’ (PIE **h_aóus-*, OIr. *ó*, Arm. *unkn*, MA 175), ‘eye’ (PIE **h₃ok^w*, OIr. *enech* ‘face’, Arm. *akn*, MA 175), ‘tooth’ (PIE **h₁dónt-*, OIr. *dét*, Arm. *atamn*, MA 175), ‘tongue’ (PIE **dnghuha-*, OIr. *tengae*, Arm. *lezu*, MA 175), ‘foot’ (PIE **péd-*, OIr. *īs* ‘below, under’, Arm. *otn*, EDPC 131, **fissu-*), ‘knee’ (PIE **gónu*, OIr. *glūn*, Arm. *cunr*, MA 183), ‘breasts’ (PIE **psténos*, OIr. *sine* ‘teats’,¹¹ Arm. *stin*, MA 181), ‘heart’ (PIE **kērd*, OIr. *cride*, Arm. *sirt*, MA 187 = EDPC 220, **kridyo-*).

Finally, let us note many correspondences in the sphere of verbs of perception and various human activities: ‘drink’ (PIE **peh₃(i)*, OIr. *ibid*, Arm. *əmpem*, MA 256), ‘lick’ (PIE **lejġh*, OIr. *ligid*, Arm. *lizem*, MA 256), ‘eat’ (PIE **h₁éd*, OIr. *ithid* ‘he eats’, Arm. *utem* ‘I eat’, MA 254), ‘suck’ (PIE **dheh₁*, OIr. *denid*, Arm. *diem*, MA 256), ‘hear’ (PIE **kleu-*, OIr. *ro cluinethar*, Arm. *lsem*, MA 335), as well as ‘what is heard, fame’ (PIE **klutós*, OIr. *cloth* ‘heard’, *clu* ‘good rumour, fame’, Arm. *lu* ‘known’, MA 335),

¹⁰ Note that both Arm. and OIr. preserved those pronouns that distinguished an alien aspect (PIE **h_aélyos* ‘other’: OIr. *aile*, Arm. *ayl*, MA 318), as well as marked the idea of completeness, wholeness (PIE **ol-jo*, OIr. *uile* ‘whole’, Arm. *olĵ* ‘whole, sound’, EDA 57).

¹¹ According to Mallory and Adams, the OIr. lexeme is derived from the stem *speno* ‘woman’s breast, nipple’ which “appears to be a metathesised and simplified Western version of PIE **psténos*” (MA 182).

‘sleep’ (PIE **swep-*, OIr. *súan*, Arm. *k’un*, EDPC 351, **sowno-*), ‘swim’ (PIE **pleu-*, OIr. *luïd* ‘moves’, Arm. *luanam* ‘I wash’, MA 404), ‘sit’ (PIE **sed-*, OIr. *saidid*, Arm. *nstim*, MA 296), ‘speak’ (PIE **wek^w* < Present o-grade **wok^wti*, OIr. *focal* ‘word’, Arm. *gočē* ‘call’, MA 352).

Other cognates are to be found among the terms used to denote natural objects: ‘moon’ (PIE **méh₁nōt*, OIr. *mī* ‘month’, Arm. *amis* ‘month’, MA 128-9), ‘star’ (PIE **h₂stér*, OIr. *ser*, Arm. *astl*, MA 129), ‘water’ (PIE **wódr*, OIr. *uisce*, Arm. *get* ‘river’, MA 125), and to ‘name’ humans (PIE **h₁nóm̥*, OIr. *ainm*, Arm. *anum*, MA 358 = EDPC 38, **anman*).¹²

However, beyond the proto-forms indicated on the list given above, one can find further parallels in different areas of PIE vocabulary than was originally supposed, that point out to a closer relationship between the two languages.

1.2. Kinship terms

Correspondences between Old Irish and Armenian in the area of family and kinship lexicon can be extended without any difficulty.

These include such appellations as ‘father’ (PIE **ph₂tér*, OIr. *athir*, Arm. *hayr*, MA 210), ‘mother’ (PIE **méh₂tér*, OIr. *māthair*, Arm. *mayr*, MA 213), ‘brother’ (PIE **b^hréh₂ter*, OIr. *brāthair*, Arm. *elbayr*, MA 214), ‘sister’ (PIE **swésōr*, OIr. *siur*, Arm. *k’oyr*, MA 256), ‘daughter’ (PIE **dhuǵ(h_a)tér*, Gaul. *duxtir*, Arm. *dustr*, MA 213), ‘grandfather; maternal uncle’ (PIE **h₂ewh₂o-*, OIr. *aue* > *ua* ‘grandchild’, Arm. *haw* ‘grandfather; ancestor’, EDA 82, **an*), ‘mother-in-law’ (PIE **swek^hru-h₂*, MW *chwegr*, Arm. *skesur*, MA 215 = EDPC 362, **swekrū*).¹³

The verbs applicable to this category include ‘to ask’ (someone in marriage) (PIE **perk²*, OIr. *arcu* ‘I beseech’, Arm. *harsn* ‘bride’, MA 358), and ‘to bear’ with a specific meaning ‘to bear a child’ (PIE **b^her-*, OIr. *beirid*, Arm. *berem*, MA 404) as well

¹² The correspondence between OIr. *ainm* and Arm. *anum* (sic!) (MA 358) < PIE *h₁nóm̥* ‘name’, was hotly debated by Matasović. Deriving OIr. *ainm* and Arm. *anun* from PIE **h₃nomn*, he discards “the evidence of Gr. *enyma* as too uncertain for positing the initial **h₁-*; however, unlike the Leiden school, I do not believe the evidence warrants **h₃neh₃mn*” (EDPC 38, **anman*).

¹³ For PCelt *duxtir* ‘daughter’, Matasović (EDPC 109) links OIr. *Der-* with Arm. *dustr*. He also proposes to link OIr. *aue*, *ua* ‘grandson’, derived from Proto-Celtic stem **awyō* ‘descendant, grandchild’ with Arm. *haw* ‘uncle’ (EDPC 50).

as the terms for ‘birth pangs’ (?PIE **ped-*, OIr. *idu*, Arm. *erkn*, EDCP 127, **fedon-*) and ‘family, household’ (PIE **ǵénh₁es*, OIr. *genas* ‘procreation, conception’, Arm. *cin* ‘birth’, MA 205). Martirosyan (EDA 590) proposed a comparison of Arm. *suk* ‘sterile, childless’ with OIr. *suth* ‘birth, fruit’ and Sanskrit *sūte* ‘give birth, beget’, etc. deriving these lexemes from PIE **s_uH-k-*.

1.3. Numbers

As far as numbers are concerned, the list of correspondences is still impressive. We get cognate forms not only in the sequence of basic numbers¹⁴ from 3 to 10 – ‘three’ (PIE **tréyes*, OIr. *trí*, Arm. *erek* ‘, MA 311), ‘four’ (PIE **k^wetwóres*, OIr. *cethair*, Arm. *č’ork* ‘, MA 311 = EDCP 179), ‘five’ (PIE **pénk^we*, OIr. *coic*, Arm. *hing*, MA 312), ‘six’ (PIE **(s)weks*, OIr. *sé*, Arm. *vec* ‘, MA 313), ‘seven’ (PIE **septṇ̥*, OIr. *secht*, Arm. *ewt’n*, MA 314), ‘eight’ (PIE **h₃oktoh₃(u)*, OIr. *ocht*, Arm. *ut* ‘, MA 314), ‘nine’ (PIE **h₁néwh₁ṇ̥*, OIr. *noí*, Arm. *inn*, MA 314), and ‘ten’ (PIE **dékm̥*, OIr. *deich*, Arm. *tasn*, MA 315), but the list of parallel formations continues further (primarily on the basis of the PIE root **kōmt(h_a)*): ‘twenty’ (PIE **wikṇ̥tih₁*, OIr. *fiche*, Arm. *k’san*, MA 316), ‘thirty’ (PIE **trī-kōmt(h_a)*, OIr. *tríochó*, Arm. *eresun*, MA 316), ‘fifty’ (PIE **pénk^we-kōmt(h_a)*, OIr. *coíca*, Arm. *yisun*, MA 316), and ‘sixty’ (PIE **(k)s(w)eks-kōmt(h_a)*, OIr. *sesca*, Arm. *vat’sun*, MA 316).

1.4. Fauna

Cognate terms for animals and birds, wild and domestic, as well as insects and reptiles, are attested in abundance. Beside cognate terms for ‘dog’, ‘wolf’ and ‘bear’ already noted above, let us point out the following corresponding names ascribed to various animal species. The list of such names among the domestic animals, includes ‘whelp, young dog’ (PIE **(s)ken-* ‘new’, OIr. *cana*, *canu*, Arm. *skund*, EDCP 187, **kanawon-*), ‘sheep’ (PIE **h₂owi-*, OIr. *oí*, Arm. *hoviw* ‘shepherd’, MA 140 = EDCP 301, **owi-*), ‘horse’ (PIE **h₁ekṵvos*, OIr. *ech*, Arm. *ēš*, MA 139 = EDCP 114, **ek^wo-*), ‘cow’ (PIE **g^wóus*, OIr. *bó*, Arm. *kov*, MA 140 = EDCP 71, **bow-*), ‘buck, he-goat’ (PIE **bhuǵos*, OIr. *boc* ‘buck’, Arm. *buc* ‘lamb’, MA 141 = EDCP 83, **bukko-*), a general term used for ‘a young of

¹⁴ As regards the basic number ‘two’, see 1.1 above, p. 86.

an animal, kid' (PIE **men-* 'small', Mr. *menn*, Arm. *manr* 'small', EDCP 266, **menno-*), also 'rooster' (PIE **klh₁-*, OIr. *cailech*, Arm. *ak'alal*, EDA 159).

Shared vocabulary in the appellation of wild animals and birds extends to 'hind-elk' (PIE **h₁elh₁ni_h₂*, OIr. *elit*, Arm. *eln* 'deer', MA 139 = EDCP 115, **elan(t)ī*, 'lynx' (PIE **lu_k*, OIr. *lug*, Arm. *lusanunk*, MA 142), 'fox' (PIE **h₂lop-*, MW *llewyn*, Arm. *ahuēs*, MA 138 = EDCP 243, **loferno-*), 'heron' (PIE *ger-*, NW. *garan*, Arm. *k'runk*, MA 144) and cognate verbs meaning 'bird cry' (the "raucous-sounding" PIE **kau(k-)*, NW. *cuan* 'nightfowl', Arm. *k'uk* 'sighing', MA 364; PIE **gar*, OIr. *do-gair*, Arm. *cicarn* 'swallow', *cicarnuk* 'nightingale', MA 354). Etymologically transparent are onomatopoeic 'cuckoo' (PIE **kukū*, OIr. *cúach*, Arm. *k(u)ku*, MA 144) and 'eagle' (PIE **h₃or-*, OIr. *irar*, Arm. *urur*, MA 144).

A category that comprises various insects and pests includes such cognates as 'louse' (PIE **k(o)nid*, OIr. *sned* 'nit', Arm. *anic*, MA 150-1) and 'tick, beetle' (PIE **diġ(h)*, OIr. *dega* 'stag beetle', Arm. *tiz*, MA 151).

Cognates in the world of reptiles are restricted by 'snake' (PIE **h_aéng^whis*, OIr. *esc-ung* 'water snake', Arm. *awj*, MA 148).

1.5. Vegetation

Turning to the cognate lexemes in the domain of the flora, let me point the reader to 'alder' (PIE **verno/eh_a*, OIr. *fern*, Arm. *geran*, MA 158 = EDCP 414, **verno-*), 'elm' (PIE **pteleyeh_a-/pteleweh_a-*, Mr. *teile* 'linden', Arm. *t'eli* 'elm', MA 159), 'blackberry' (PIE **morom-*, NW. *merwydd* 'mulberry', Arm. *mor* 'blackberry', MA 160), 'sprout' (PIE **dhal-*, NW. *dail* 'leaf', Arm. *dalar* 'green', MA 161),¹⁵ 'resin, pitch' (PIE **g^wih₃wo-*, OIr. *bí*, Arm. *kiv*, *kvoy* 'tree pitch', MA 161 = EDCP 67, **bīwV-*).

Martirosyan also compares Arm. *keč'i* 'birch' and OIr. *beithe* 'box-tree' < **betūjā*, MW. *bedw* 'birches' < **betūa* < **betūjā* that "may derive from QIE **gwet(u)-jēh₂-...* The Armenian form is close to the Celtic both formally and semantically. Compare also *kiw* 'tree

¹⁵ Matasović points at the correspondence between MW *deillyau* 'emanate, proceed, originate', and Greek *thállo* 'blossom' and Arm. *dalar* 'green', linking the latter with Mr. *duilne* (EDCP 102, **dol-V-*). "Some linguists reconstruct the PIE root as *d^helh₁-*, but I do not believe that the evidence warrants that reconstruction. Celtic generalised the zero-grade of the root in **dal-n-* (< **d^hl-n-eh₁*), but the o-grade is probably attested in **dolisko-* 'seaweed' and **dol-V-* 'leaf'" (EDCP 88, **dal-n-*).

pitch, mastic, chewing-gum’ which too (1) comes from an old **u*-stem; (2) belongs to the same semantic sphere; (3) is closely related to Celtic and Slavic” (EDA 359).

Matasović indicates Arm. *hac* ‘i ‘ash-tree’ among the cognates of the OIr. *uinnius* ‘id.’ (EDPC 301, **osno*-).

1.6. Human body and senses

Celtic and Armenian also share a significant number of nouns that describe the human appearance as well as various parts and organs of human body, including verbs connected with (presence/absence of) various human vital functions:¹⁶ ‘form, appearance’ (PIE **prep-* ‘appear’, OIr. *richt*, Arm. *erewim* ‘be evident, appear’, MA 327 = EDPC 141, **frixtu*-), ‘nose’ (PIE **sreg^h*- ‘snore’, OIr. *srón* ‘nose’, Arm. *ṁgun-k* ‘id.’, EDPC 352, **srognā*-), ‘chin’ (PIE **smek^hru*-, OIr. *smech*, Arm. *mawru-k* ‘beard’, EDPC 347, **smeko*-), ‘jaw’ (PIE **gēnu*- > OIr. *gin* ‘mouth’, PIE **gondh_adh-o-s* > Arm. *cnawt* ‘chin’, MA 176), ‘elbow, forearm’ (PIE **h₃elVn*, OIr. *uilen* ‘corner, elbow’, EDPC 297, **olīnā*, and closely related PIE **h₃elek* > Arm. *olok* ‘shin, leg’, MA 182), ‘spleen’ (PIE **sploigh₂-ēn*, OIr. *selg*, Arm. *p’aycaln*, MA 187 = EDPC 141, **sfelgā*-), ‘testicles’ (PIE **h₄órghis*, MIr. *uirge*, Arm. *orjik* ‘MA 184 = EDPC 300, **orgyā*), ‘entrails’ (PIE **h₁eh₁tr-* > OIr. *inathar*, MA 187, cp. PIE **h₁ent(e)rom* > Arm. *ānderk*, MA 186), ‘side’ (PIE **teig^w*, OIr. *tóib*, Arm. *t’ekn* ‘shoulder’, MA 182 = EDPC 387, **toybo*-), ‘sneeze’ (PIE **pster*, OIr. *sréod*, Arm. *p’rngam*, MA 196 = EDPC 149, **fstr-ew*-), ‘sleep’ (PIE **swópno*-, OIr. *súan*, Arm. *k’un*, Matasović 2009: 351, **sowno*-), ‘die’ (PIE **mer*-, OIr. *marbaid* ‘kills’, Arm. *meranim* ‘I die’;¹⁷ cf. also PIE **g^weh₂-*, OIr. *baïd*, Arm. *kam* ‘stand’, EDPC 52, **ba-yo*-), ‘death’ (PIE **dheu*-, OIr. *díth*, Arm. *di* ‘corpse’, MA 199), ‘mortal being = human’ (PIE **mórtos*, OIr. *mart* ‘violent death’, Arm. *mard* ‘a human’).

¹⁶ Including the sphere of intellectual activity and speech, attested in both languages in the verb ‘find (out)’ (PIE **weyd*-, OIr. *ro-finnadar* lit. ‘I have found out’, Arm. *gitem* ‘know’) and the noun ‘voice, word’ (PIE **wok^w* ‘voice’, MW *gwaethl* ‘debate’, Arm. *gočem* ‘I call’) (EDPC 422, **wi-n-d-o*-, 429, **wox-tlo*- ‘dispute’).

¹⁷ As P. Kocharov informs me (p.c.), the Arm. verb “present stem formation is not entirely clear (a back formation from root aorist **mers*- > Aor. *meṛ* > Pres. *meṛ* - *anim* or a renovated nasal present **meṛ* - *nH-m* > **meṛ* *anam* → *meranim*).”

1.7. Sphere of settled life

Early Irish and Armenian linguistic traditions share a number of cognates in terms of their communal and settled way of life and everyday activities. These are ‘inheritance’ (PIE **h₁orb^ho-*, OIr. *orb* ‘heir’, Arm. *orb* ‘orphan’, EDPC 299, **orbo-*),¹⁸ ‘home’ (PIE **dōm*, OIr. *dam*, Arm. *tun*, MA 206), ‘fire’ (PIE **h₂eh_x-ter*, OIr. *āith* ‘furnace’, W. *odyn* ‘id.’, Arm. *ayrem* ‘I burn’, EDA 63 = MA 67), ‘door’ (PIE **dhwōr*, OIr. *dorus*, Arm. *dur-k*, MA 224), ‘stay, remain’ (PIE **men*, OIr. *ainmne* ‘duty’, Arm. *mnam* ‘stay, expect’, MA 219 = EDPC 38, **an-men-V-*), ‘earth, ground’ (PIE **telh₂-m-* ‘surface’, OIr. *talam*, Arm. *t’al* ‘district’, EDPC 366, **talamon-*), ‘field’ (PIE **h₂érh₃wr*, OIr. *arbor* ‘seed’, Arm. *haravunk* ‘field’, MA 163 = EDA 394), ‘plow’ (PIE **h₂érh₃trom*, Mlr. *arathar*, Arm. *arawr*, EDA 128), ‘grind’ (the cereal) (PIE **melh₂*, OIr. *meilid*, Arm. *malem*, MA 168 = EDPC 255, **mal-o-*), ‘quern’ (PIE **g^wréh_x-w-on-*, OIr. *brán*, *bró*, Arm. *erkan*, MA 243 = EDPC 75, **brawon-*), ‘raw, uncooked’ (PIE **h₂omós*, OIr. *om*, Arm. *hum*, MA 260 = EDPC 299, **omo*), ‘salt’ (PIE **seh_a-(e)l*, OIr. *salann*, Arm. *al*, MA 261), ‘meat’ (PIE **mē(m)s*, OIr. *méthas* ‘fat, fat meat’, Arm. *mis*, MA 261), ‘wool’ (PIE **h₂ulh₁-no/eh₂-*, OIr. *olann*, MW *gwlán*, Arm. *gelmn*, EDA 204) as well as ‘honey’ (PIE **meli-t-*, OIr. *mil*, Arm. *melr*, EDA 462 = EDPC 263, **meli*).¹⁹

1.8. Travel, trade and craft

Besides all forms of activities that describe the settled way of life, Celtic and Armenian also share a number of word formations that belong to the field of mobility, travel, trade and economics in general: ‘boat’ (PIE **neh₂u-*, OIr. *nau*, Arm. *naw*, EDA 500 = EDPC 285, **nāwā-*), ‘silver ~ money’ (PIE **h₂reg^h-nt-om*, OIr. *argat*, Arm. *arcat*, MA 242 = EDPC 41, **arganto-*), ‘yoke’ (PIE **yugóm*, Ml *cuing*, OW. *iou*, Arm. *luc*, MA 248 = EDPC 437, **yugo-*), ‘passage’ (PIE **sentos* < **sent-* ‘go’, OIr. *sét*, Arm. *ənt’ac*, MA 250), ‘footprint, track, path’ (PIE **pedom*, Mlr. *inad* ‘position, place’ (< **eni-pedo*), Arm. *het* ‘footprint, track’, MA 250 = EDPC 116, **eni-*

¹⁸ Mallory & Adams derive OIr. *orb* ‘heir, inheritance’, and Arm. *orb* ‘orphan’ from PIE **h₂orbhos* ‘orphan’ (MA 208).

¹⁹ Despite a correspondence between OIr. *fín* and Arm. *gini* < PIE *wóinom* ‘wine’, this pair cannot be invoked as the Irish lexeme is a direct borrowing from Lat. *vīnum*.

fedo-), ‘pass/spend the night’ (PIE **h₂wes*, OIr. *foaid*, Arm. *goy* ‘is’, MA 219 = EDPC 428, **wos-o-*; cf. also PIE **h₁e/oi-g^h*, OIr. *óegi* ‘guest’, Arm. *ēj* ‘to stay overnight’, EDA 277), ‘take, grasp’ (PIE **dergh*, OIr. *dremm* ‘troop, band’, Arm. *trc’ak* ‘bundle of brushwood’, MA 272) vs. ‘give’ (PIE *deh₃*, OIr. *dánaid*, Arm. *tam* < PIE **dh₃-ye/o-*), ‘gift’ (PIE *déh₃r/n*, OIr. *dán*, Arm. *tur*, EDPC 90, **dānu*) and ‘measure’ (PIE *med*, OIr. *midithir* ‘judges’, Arm. *mit* ‘thought, reason’, MA 318). One can also probably refer to craftwork, poetry and related terms in this regard:

It is tempting to compare Arm. *k’erday/k’erdoy* ‘scribe’ with Welsh *cerdd* ‘craft; poetry, poem’,²⁰ OIr. *cerd* ‘craft; poetry’, ‘craftsman, artisan, gold- and silversmith; poet’ from QIE. **kerdā-*, cf. Gr. *κέρδος* n. ‘gain, profit, desire to gain, cunning, wiles’ (EDA 662).

1.9. War and battle

A number of cognate verbs that are applicable to descriptions of warfare survived in Celtic and Armenian: ‘strike’ (PIE *g^when-*, OIr. *gonaid* ‘wounds, strikes’, Arm. *ganem* ‘I strike’, MA 279), ‘wound’ (PIE *wen*, NW. *gweint*, Arm. *vandem* ‘I destroy’, MA 280), ‘destroy’ (PIE *h₂erk-*, OIr. *oirgid*, Arm. *harkanem* ‘split, fell’, MA 281), ‘strike, stab’ (PIE **g^wel-*, MW *bel*, *belu* ‘pierce’, NW. *ballu*, Arm. *kelem* ‘torture; suffer’, MA 282 = EDPC 61, **bel-o-*), ‘break, crush’ (PIE **bheg*, OIr. *boingid*, Arm. *bekanem*, MA 371)²¹ as well as adjectives that describe emotionally loaded states of being – ‘angry, violent’ (PIE *bhorg^wo*, OIr. *borb* ‘stupid, violent’, Arm. *bark*, MA 340) and ‘frightening, threatening’ (PIE *garǵos*, MIr. *garg* ‘rough’, Arm. *karcr* ‘hard’, EDPC 151, **gargo-*) – as well as pointed weapons: ‘pointed, sharp’ (PIE *h_aeḱ* NW. *hogi* ‘sharpen’, Arm. *asełn* ‘needle’, MA 298).

²⁰ Note that Arm. *erg* ‘poem; song’ (which “is regarded as an inheritance from the IE poetic language”, EDA 259) is related to OIr. *erc* ‘sky’ (both derived from PIE *h₁erkw-o*). However, Makaev (1974: 56-57) points out that an OIr. lexeme may belong to the PIE name of the Thunder God (**perk^w-*).

²¹ Matasović (2009: 60) prefers an earlier form of the Old Irish verb, *do-beig* (< PCelt *bego*), comparing it to an aorist form of its Armenian cognate *ebek* ‘broke’ to highlight the existing relationship between the two verbs.

1.10. *Seasons and time*

The two language groups preserved cognate terms only for three seasons, namely ‘spring’ (PIE *wésr*, OIr. *errach*, Arm. *garun*, MA 302), ‘summer’ (PIE *sem-*, OIr. *sam*, Arm. *am* ‘year’, MA 302 = EDPC 321, **samo-*), and ‘winter’ (PIE *ǵheim-*, OIr. *gaim*,²² Arm. *jiwn* ‘snow’, MA 302 = EDPC 170, **gyemo-* < PIE **ǵ^hyem-*) which hints at the existence of the originally tripartite division of the ‘year’ (PIE *wet*, OIr. *feis*, Arm. *heru* ‘last year’ < **per-wet*, MA 302) among the Indo-Europeans. Also common to both languages are the nouns denoting the division of time into ‘day’ (PIE *dye(u)*, OIr. *día*, Arm. *tiw*, MA 301)²³ and ‘evening’ (PIE *wesk^wer-*, OIr. *fescor*, Arm. *gišer*, MA 303 = EDPC 416, **wesk^wero-*), and the adjectives ‘old’ (PIE *sénos*, OIr. *sen*, MW *hen*, Arm. *hin*, MA 303 = EDPC 330, **seno-*) and ‘new’ (PIE *newos*, OIr. *núae*, Arm. *nor*, MA 303 = EDPC 293, **nowyo*) as well as ‘slow’ (PIE *duh₂-*, OIr. *dóe*, Arm. *tev* ‘duration’, EDPC 110, **dwāyo-*) which all denote various temporal categories.²⁴

1.11. *Descriptive adjectives*

A few words suffice to describe parallels existing among the pairs of adjectives describing various states of being: ‘warm’ (PIE **ǵ^whrensós* > OIr. *grís* ‘heat, fire’; PIE *ǵ^wher* > Arm. *jerm*, MA 344) and ‘cold’ (PIE **h₃eug-*, OIr. *uacht*, Arm. *oyc*, MA 348),²⁵ ‘bright’ (PIE **leukós* > OIr. *lóch*, PIE **lóuk(es)* > Arm. *loys* ‘light’, MA 328-9; cf. also PIE **b^heh₂-* ‘shine’, OIr. *bán* ‘white’, ‘perhaps Arm. *banam* ‘open’’, EDPC 55, **bāno-*) and ‘dark’ (PIE **tem(ə)-*, Mlr. *temen*, Arm. *Təmnis* n. loc., EDA 676), ‘dry’ (PIE **ters*, Arm. *t‘arāmim* ‘wilt, fade’, MA 346, also Arm. *t‘arām* ‘withered’, cognate with OIr. *tírim* ‘id.’) and ‘wet’ (PIE **nébhos* ‘cloud, mist, sky’, OIr. *nem* ‘heaven’, MA 129, cognate with Arm. *amp* ‘wet’;²⁶ cf. also PIE

²² Also note Gaulish *Giamonios* as the name of a winter month (MA 302).

²³ Matasović (EDPC 101) reconstructs OIr. *díe* from PCelt **dīy(w)o-* ‘day’ and also links it with Arm. *tiv*. He also hints at the existence of a lexeme to denote ‘last year’, PIE **per-uti* > PCelt **feruti-*, linking OIr. *innuraid* and Arm. *heru* together (EDPC 128).

²⁴ Discussing the etymology of Arm. *amanak* ‘time’, Martirosyan (EDA 46) wonders whether there is any relation between this lexeme and OIr. *amm* ‘id.’.

²⁵ Similarly, Matasović derives OIr. *úar* ‘cold’ and Arm. *oyc* ‘cold’ from PIE *h₃ewg-* ‘id.’ (EDPC 301, **owgro-*).

²⁶ As P. Kocharov (p.c.) informs me, an oft-cited parallel with Arm. *nam* ‘wet’ cannot be legitimately invoked here, as the Arm. word is “an Iranian loanword, cf.

**del-* ‘sprinkle’, OIr. *delt* ‘dew’, Arm. *tel* ‘strong rain’, EDPC 95, **delto-*), ‘hard, solid’ (PIE *kar-*, OIr. *carrac* ‘rock’, Arm. *k’ar* ‘hard’, EDA 685), and, finally, ‘thin, sparse, fine’ (PIE *menus/menwos*, OIr. *menb* ‘small, tiny’, Arm. *manr* ‘small’, MA 320).

1.12. Emotional, productive and telic verbs

Cognate verbal formations between Celtic and Armenian abound. Among verbs expressing emotions are ‘complain’ (PIE **leh*_a, OIr. *liūd*, Arm. *lam* ‘I weep’, MA 362-3) and ‘lament’ (PIE **ġem*, Mod. Ir. *geamh* ‘prattle’, Arm. *cmrim* ‘grieve’, MA 363). Note also expressions of grief, of contentment, happiness and desire, among them the onomatopoeic formations ‘alas’ (PIE **wai*, OIr. *fae*, Arm. *vay*, MA 359) and ‘laugh’ (PIE **kha*, OIr. *cais*, Arm. *xaxank*, MA 359) as well as the lexemes denoting ‘satisfaction’ (PIE **seh*₂*tis-*, OIr. *saith* ‘satisfaction’, Arm. *hač* ‘contended’ (< **seh*₂*(i)-*), MA 342) and ‘wish’ (PIE **wel*(*h*_a), MW. *gwell* ‘better’, Arm. *gel* ‘beauty’, MA 341).²⁷ Verbs, expressing some form of productive activity, include ‘work (with clay), build’ (PIE **dheigh*, OIr. *con-utainc* ‘builds’, Arm. *dizanem* ‘I heap up’, MA 371), ‘cut off, apart’ (PIE *(*s*)*ker*, OIr. *scaraid* ‘separates, divides’, Arm. *k’ert’em* ‘skin’, MA 373), ‘split, chip’ (PIE *(*s*)*kel*, Mlr. *scoiltid* ‘chips’, Arm. *skalim* ‘split, be splintered’, MA 374), ‘press, squeeze together’ (PIE *gem*, Mlr. *gemel* ‘fetters’, Arm. *čmlem* ‘press together’, MA 384), ‘grind’ (PIE *melh*₂, OIr. *meilid*, Arm. *malem*, MA 168 = EDPC 255, **mal-o-*, **mel-o-*).

Telic verbs include ‘approach’ (PIE *pelh*₂, OIr. *ad-ella*, Arm. *elanem* ‘I exit’, EDPC 125, **fal-na-*), ‘attain’ (PIE *h₁enek-*, OIr. *ro-icc* ‘reaches’, Arm. *hasanem* ‘I arrive’, MA 396), ‘go’ (PIE *h₁el-*, MW. *el* ‘may go’, Arm. *el* ‘climbed, came out’, MA 397), ‘run’ (PIE *dhregh-*, nominalised in OIr. *droch* ‘wheel’, Arm. *durgn* ‘wheel’ MA 400 = EDPC 105, **droko-*), ‘leave (behind)’ (PIE *leik*^w-, OIr. *léicid*, EDPC 240, **li-n-k*^w-o-, and Arm. *lk’anem*, MA 401), ‘drive’ (PIE **h_aeġ*, OIr. *ad-aig*, Arm. *acem*, MA 406 = EDPC 27, **ag-o-*).

Pahlavi *nam(b)* ‘wet’ that is further compared to Lat. *nimbus* from reduplicated **ne-nb*^h- or infixed **ne-n-b*^h- stem of the same root as in **neb*^h-os”.

²⁷ Note also Matasović (EDPC 48) who proposes to link MW *ewyllys* ‘will, appetite’ and Arm. *aviwn* ‘lust’ for Proto-Celtic stem **awislo-* ‘wish, desire’ which he derives from PIE *h₂ewH-* ‘wish’.

* * *

It is probably true to say that the Celto-Armenian shared vocabulary points to the existence of a proto-phase in the development of the two language groups when they belonged to a unity not yet divided into Western, Central and Eastern Indo-European groups. Looking back at the compiled list, one cannot help thinking that it provides quite a comfortable vocabulary for a speaker of this proto-language.

Such domains of human life as kinship and family (including the concept of ‘home’), seasons and time, war and peace, battle and labour, body and senses are covered by these Celto-Armenian isoglosses. It is too early to make any far-reaching conclusions, but such cognates can cast some light on the problem of calendrical formation and the introduction of the fourth season, on the character of IE immediate family, on farming and agricultural practices, as well as on economics and craftsmanship. Proto-Celts and Proto-Armenians at this period of their IE unity were already able to express their emotions quite well and to count to at least 60! Furthermore, they were able to plan and judge their actions, and contrast various natural phenomena (warm vs. cold, dry vs. wet, dark vs. light etc.) if necessary.

2. Armenia in medieval and early modern Irish writing

It is safe to say that Armenia became incorporated into the mindset of the medieval Irish literati from quite an early age. In the composition *Sex Aetatis Mundi*, contained in the late eleventh century ‘Book of the Dun Cow’ (*Lebor na hUidre*) manuscript, Armenians are listed at the end of the list of the progeny of Shem, son of Noah. Having mentioned the lands and inhabitants of Persia, Assyria, Syria and India, the compiler speaks of the sons of Saram, son of Shem and grandson of Noah:

Clanna Saram meic Sem meic Noi .i. Us. is uad atár Traconitidi 7 is les ro cumtaiged in Damaisc. etir Pasilisitina 7 Coelensiria atá a ferand side. Ul. is úad atát Armiannai. Gether is úad atát Arcannai. Mes. is úad atát Meones. de sil Samar (sic!) meic Sem meic Noah dóib sein ule 7 is i nAsia atát (Bergin & Best 1929: 4).

The progeny of Saram son of Shem son of Noah, i.e. Us. It is from him that are Traconitidians and it is his [people] built Damascus. His other lands are between Palestine and Little Syria. Ul. Armenians are from him. Arcanians are from Gether. Meonians are from Mes. They are all from the progeny of Samar son of Shem son of Noah and they are in Asia.

The late eleventh century *Book of Leinster* contains a poem ‘Rofessa i curp domuin dúir’ written by Mac Cosse, the learned man of Ros Ailithir (Mlr. *fer legind Ruis Ailithir*) in which the Lord’s division of the world into three parts (Europe, Asia and Africa) is presented (Mlr. *tri ranna ra delig Dia, Euraip Affraic is Asia*, Best & O’Brien 1957: 524). The poem then goes on to describe Asia first. A similar passage is also found in the second part of the Rawlinson B 502 manuscript written in the mid-twelfth century, in the composition *Miniugud na Croeb Coibnesta*, a description of the wonderings of the descendants of Éremón up to the time of Eochaid Mugmedón’s sons, in which the itinerary of the Gaels is conveyed as follows:

*Ni haise atát tair na fír | Eufrait is Tigris | ... |
is tuatha Mesopotámia / Siria fri Eufrait aniar
Co mothor Mara Torrián / o Egipt fethit a fóit /
fothúaid cosin Capadóic / Fri Magena atuaid a thréin /
fri Capadóic fri hArmein
(Best & O’Brien 1957: 526 = Rawlinson B 502, fo. 78 a 1-4)*

There is no reproach before the men | Euphrates and Tigris |
... | and the tribes of Mesopotamia | Syria towards Euphrates
in the west | to the wilderness of the Tyrrhene
(Mediterranean) Sea | from Egypt direct their course |
northwards to Cappadocia | to Magena from the north its
strength | to Cappadocia and to Armenia.²⁸

We will come back to the origin of the Gaels and their treatment in the works of the eighteenth century antiquarians later. As far as the works of the medieval Irish scribes and their treatment of the

²⁸ See further an article by John Carey in this volume on the insular medieval lore regarding the origins of the Irish.

Armenians in a more detailed way is concerned, let us turn to Eg. 1782 MS.

Its folio 56 a 2 contains a poem devoted to characteristics of various nations, including the Jews, the Greeks, the Saxons, the Spaniards, the French, the Scots, etc. The majority of the peoples listed, however, are taken from the stock of the European nations, and there are only three, including the Armenians, that are of Middle Eastern provenance:

*Cumtach na n-Iudaide n-ard ocus a format fírgarg.
mét na n-Arménech cin feall. is sonairti na Serrchenn...
Mormenma Cruithnech cin ail. cruth etrad in Gaóidelaib.
genus na n-Gérmanach n-glan, mochin, a Chríst,
dan cumtach.*

The architecture of the Jews and their truly fierce envy.
The large size of the Armenians without deceit,
And the strength of the Saracens...
The high spirit of the Picts without blemish,
Beauty of shape and lust in Gaels.
The chastity of pure Germans, welcome, o Christ,
From whom is protection.

(Meyer 1897: 112-3)

According to the Irish medieval linguistic tradition, Armenian (amongst the other seventy-two select languages) played its part in the compilation of the Irish tongue:

*Cest, caidhead na a n-anmandh na da cenel sechmogat o
rofaghlaime na hilberlae? Ni ansa. Beithin, Scithi, Scuit,
Germain... Maguich, Armoin, Amuis, Goircc, Galaid...*

Query, what are the names of the 72 races from which the many languages were learnt? Not hard. Bithinians, Scythians, Scots, Germans... Magogians, Armenians, Amuis, Gairg, Galatians...

(Calder 1917: 16-7).

All these references do not really say much, apart from the fact that the medieval Irish believed that Armenians were of large size, inhabited some distant territories of faraway Asia and lived

between such tribes as the fictional Magogians and no less fictional Traconitidians.²⁹

More elaborate descriptions of Armenia entered the discourse of medieval Irish writing only with the translation of *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* into Irish from the Latin version of Francesco Pipino (written down c. 1255) which survived in the fifteenth century manuscript *The Book of Lismore*. The description of Lesser Armenia (in historical terms, the kingdom of Cilicia) opens *The Book*, which then goes on to describe Armenia proper, including its major landmark – the mount Ararat, synecdochically called by the source “mount Armenia” (Mlr. *sliab Armenia*):

§3. *Nairméin bec cetamus, fo chis do Magnus fíl sí. Tír ísidhe co n-imat cathrach ⁊ maini na n-anaithnidi fria creic ⁊ cundradh. Glaisia is cathair oirechais dí ⁊ ar muir ata sí. Tursie .i. proibhinnsi fuil innti. tír sleibtidhi ísidhe. ⁊ do Macumetus adhruid. Eich amra leo ⁊ imat sida.*

§4. *Nairméin mhór imorro, tír forlethan ísidhe. Fo mhamus Magnus fuil sí. Imut cathrach ⁊ maine leo. Da chathair oirdnidi le. Agiron ⁊ Baririm a n-anmanna ⁊ isin tírsin ata sliab Armenia. Is airside roairis in áirc iar ternam o dhilinn.*

§3. In the first place, the Lesser Armenia, it is under tribute to Magnus. A country with abundance of towns, and unknowable treasures for trade and traffic. Glaisia (Ayas), which stands on the sea, is its chief city. A province therein is Tursie (Turkey): this is a mountainous country, and they (the inhabitants) worship Mahomet. Excellent horses they have and plenty of silk.

§4. Now the Greater Armenia, this is an extensive country. It is under the yoke of Magnus. They (the inhabitants) have the abundance of towns and treasures. Two noble cities it has, Agiron (Erzrum) and Baririm are their names; and in that country is the Mount of Armenia. Thereon the Ark rested after escaping from the Deluge.

(Stokes 1896: 246-9)

²⁹ See the contribution by Sergey Ivanov below for an overview of the Irish sources in which Armenia and the Armenians have strong associations with the Magogians within the medieval Irish cosmography and aetiology.

Looking at these instances, it is important to note that Armenia was treated on the par with India – as a far away and rich land situated in the Orient, full of treasures and densely populated. As appropriate comparanda, let us look at the following piece from the *The Buke of John Maundeville* translated into Irish in 1475 by Fingín O'Mahony, describing India:

*Tíagur asan tír sin annsa n-Inndia móir atá arna roinn a trí,
 ⁊ is adhbhal tes an tíre sin, ⁊ an Indía bec atá can
 imforcraidh tesa na fúachta, ⁊ ind Innía is sía uainn díb atá
 sí rofhuar, ⁊ atá do mét a seca ⁊ a h-oigre co n-déin cristal
 da h-uisci ⁊ co fásann diamont co lór innti, ⁊ atá do
 láidirecht an díamoint fhásus innti nach fuil ar doman ní
 úrchóidighes dó acht fuil bocain.*

§137. From that land men go into the Greater India, which is divided into three parts, and mighty is the heat of that land. And the Lesser India is without excess of heat or cold; but the India that is farthest from us is exceeding cold, and such is the greatness of its frost and its ice that it makes crystal of its water and that the diamond grows abundantly in it. Such is the strength of the diamond that grows therein that nothing on earth can hurt it save a he-goat's blood.

(Stokes 1899: 240-1)

However, there was one feature that identified Armenia in a unique way in the eyes of the Irish: that is the Noah's ark resting on the top of Ararat, the most important Armenian mountain. One can also find a reference to Ararat (called there by its real name) and to the Noah's ark (visible on the mountain's peak in good weather) in the *Buke*:

*An t-slige ó Troposonda co cathair Artirón do múiretur ⁊
 d'airgetur Tuircínigh, ⁊ úaithe sin co cnoc Araráa da n-
 gairitt Idhail Dánó, mura fuil airc Náei, ⁊ do cídh daeine a
 soinind maith ar an cnoc sin hí...Ocus assin trit an Aramén
 móir ⁊ co cathair Casátus mur a tarladur na trí rígh dáchéile
 ac dul leisna h-aiscedha dochum Meic Dé.*

§132. The road from Trebizond is to the city of Arturon, which the Turks destroyed and ravaged. And from that to Mount Ararat, which the Jews call Dano, where there is the ark of Noah, and in fine weather men see it on that hill...

§134. And thence (*one goes*) through Great Armenia, and to the city Casatus, where the three kings met together, when they went with presents to the Son of God.³⁰

(Stokes 1899: 238-9)

The description of the country itself and its religion is contained further in the *Buke* following the description of the kingdom of Persia:

Atá ríghdacht na h-Armene láimh ré sin ina rabadur cethra ríghdhachta uair écin; ⁊ is mór saidhbhir an tír si, ⁊ atá sí síar ó ríghdacht na Pers ar fad co Turcia, ⁊ a letheatt ó Alaxandria co ríghdacht Med, ⁊ is imdha cathracha áille 'sa ríghdacht, ⁊ is í Tauarisi cathuir is mó ainm indti... Doba cristaidi in trath sin Tursie ⁊ Suria ⁊ Tartairia ⁊ Iudeia ⁊ Palastini ⁊ Arabia ⁊ Harmapé ⁊ Persaidh ⁊ Medhaigh ⁊ Airmein ⁊ in Eighipt uile.

§228. Hard by is the kingdom of Armenia, wherein were once upon a time four kingdoms. Great and rich is this country, and it stretches westward from the kingdom of Persia along to Turkey, and its breadth is from Alexandria to the kingdom of Media. There are many beautiful cities in this kingdom, but Tauarisi (Tabriz) is the city most of name therein...

§268. At that time Turkey was Christian, and Syria, and Tartary, and Judaea, and Palestine, and Arabia, and Harmape, and Persia, and Media, and Armenia, and the whole of Egypt.

(Stokes 1899: 278-81, 298-9)

³⁰ The *Buke of Maundeville* continues on “And thence to the Land of the Women”. On the linkages existing between the so-called “Land of Women” (in this context, of the Amazons) and Armenia in Irish compositions, see the article by S. Ivanov in this volume.

3. Whence came the Irish: from Celto-Scythia or Phoenicia?

Finally, I would like to deal with the writings of the eighteenth century Irish antiquarians who, similarly to the twelfth century *The Book of Leinster* genealogists, tried to uncover the origin of the Irish race. It was the general Charles Vallancey, who, in his 1786 preface to a composition entitled *A Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland*, attempted to propose an early dynamic tribe of nomadic people, the Scytho-Celts (which he also called as the Celto-Scythians, the Scytho-Iberian nation in Asia, etc.), whom he divided into two major groups – “the Nomade or Northern Scythian, and the civilized or Southern [Magogian] Scythian of Armenia” (Vallancey 1786: 11, cit. from Lennon 2004: 93):

[T]he body of [Southern] Mogogian [*sic*] Scythians ... were a polished people before they left Asia; the first astronomers, navigators, and traders, after the flood... That, from their first settlement in Armenia, they soon passed down the Euphrates to the Persian Gulph, round the Indian Ocean, to the Red Sea, up the coast of the Mediterranean almost to Tyre. The Greeks knew them by the names of the Phoenicians of the Red Sea, by Ichthyophagi and Troglodytae: in Scripture they are called *Am Siim* or Ship people, and *Naphuth Dori* or Maritime folk.

(Vallancey 1786: 13-4, cit. from Lennon 2004: 93)

In the nineteenth century, Canon Ulick Bourke wrote a history primer entitled *Pre-Christian Ireland*, which was published in 1887. It opens with a questionnaire on the “Certainty of Early Keltic Settlements in Eire”:

Q.1. Where did the earliest races who first reached Ireland come from? A. From the east, from the high table-lands reaching from Mount Ararat in Armenia, by the Caspian Sea, south and east.

(cit. from Lennon 2004: 131)

Let me conclude by saying that whether the inhabitants of Ireland originally travelled from Armenia or not, it did occupy a very special place in their heart. My last example of a reference to this country contained in the store of Irish writing comes from a poem ‘Cáit Bhéilbhinn’ by an eighteenth century Irish poet Peadar Ó Doirnín (al. Peter O’Dornin) (1704-1769), who invoked

an intriguingly rare metaphor when speaking of his beloved and his feelings:

*Táinte Éireann dá bhfaighinn féin is a bhfuil insa Spáinn,
Agus bláth péarlaí na hÁirménia go huile in mo láimh,
Ba dá fhearr liom mo ghrá séinmh a bheith eadra mé is
lár...*

If I got the treasures of Ireland and the ones which are in
Spain,
And the prime of the pearls of Armenia all in all in my hand
I would still prefer my tender love to be between me and the
ground...

(Ó Buachalla 1969: 43).

And if the pearls of Armenia, together with all the treasures of
Spain and of Ireland, are taken to be as important as the love of the
poet (lasting until he is dead), how more important can they be?

Abbreviations:

EDA = **Martirosyan**, H., 2010, *Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Inherited Lexicon*, Leiden: Brill.

EDPC = **Matasović**, R., 2009, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*, Leiden-Boston: Brill.

MA = **Mallory**, J.P., **Adams**, D. Q., 2008, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1st ed. 2006).

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